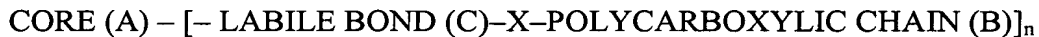


This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A hydrophilic polycarboxylic polymer with improved degradability ~~corresponding to~~ of the following general structure:



~~composed of~~ wherein CORE (A) is a biodegradable core (A) selected from the group consisting of residues of pentaerythritol tetramercaptopropionate, trimethylolpropane trimercaptoacetate, and ethylene glycol dimercaptoacetate with the mercaptopropionate or mercaptoacetate groups removed, to which are attached polycarboxylic chains (B) via bond a group (C) having a labile bond easily which is degradable by alkaline or enzymatic hydrolysis or by oxidative cleavage, X is a transfer agent bivalent atom, and n is a number from 2 to 10.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the ~~polyacrylic~~ polycarboxylic chains are acrylic acid homopolymers with a degree of polymerization of less than or equal to 20.

4. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the ~~polyacrylic~~ polycarboxylic chains are copolymers of acrylic acid and ~~of other monomers, such as~~ at least one other monomer selected from the group consisting of unsaturated carboxylic monomers, maleic anhydride, vinyl or acrylic

monomers, ~~or~~ and diene monomers, ~~such as isoprene or butadiene~~, with a degree of polymerization of less than or equal to 20.

5. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the connection (X) between the molecule comprising a labile bond and the polycarboxylic chain is composed of a sulfur atom.

6. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the labile bond ~~hydrolyzable~~ degradable by the alkaline or enzymatic hydrolysis is an route, such as an ester, amide, thioester or thioamide bond, ~~or~~ and the labile bond degradable by oxidative cleavage is cleavable by chemical or biological oxidation, such as a double or triple bond.

7. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~constructed on~~ wherein CORE (A) is the residue of pentaerythritol tetramercaptopropionate with the mercaptopropionate groups removed.

8. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~constructed on~~ wherein CORE (A) is the residue of trimethylolpropane trimercaptoacetate with the mercaptoacetate groups removed.

9. (Currently Amended) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, ~~constructed on~~ wherein CORE (A) is the residue of ethylene glycol dimercaptoacetate with the mercaptoacetate groups removed.

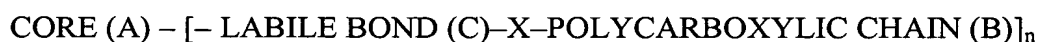
10. (Canceled)

11. (Canceled)

12. (New) The hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polycarboxylic chains each have a weight-average molecular weight of between 100 and 2000.

13. (New) A detergent composition which comprises a hydrophilic polymer as claimed in claim 1 and at least one other detergent composition component.

14. (New) A crosslinked hydrophilic polycarboxylic polymer with improved degradability wherein the hydrophilic polycarboxylic polymer is of the following general structure:



wherein CORE (A) is a biodegradable core selected from the group consisting of residues of pentaerythritol tetramercaptopropionate, trimethylolpropane trimercaptoacetate, and ethylene glycol dimercaptoacetate with the mercaptopropionate or mercaptoacetate groups removed, to which are attached polycarboxylic chains (B) via a group (C) having a labile bond which is degradable by alkaline or enzymatic hydrolysis or by oxidative cleavage, X is a bivalent atom, and n is a number from 2 to 10,

which polymer is crosslinked by difunctional agents such that the crosslinked polymer has superabsorbant properties.